A

SERMON

PREACH'D before their

MAJESTIES

AT

WHITE-HALL,

On *February* the 16*th*, 1689-90.

Psalm Lxxviii. 5, 6.

He establish'd a Testimony in Jacob, and appointed a Law in Israel, which he commanded our Forefathers, that they should make them known to their Children.

That the Generations to come might know them, even the Children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their Children.

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PSALM LXXVIII. 5, 6.

V. 5.--- *He established a Testimony in Jacob, and appointed a Law in Israel, which he commanded our Forefathers, That they should make them known to their Children.*

V. 6. *That the Generations to come might know Them, even the Children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their Children.*

THE Title of *Benefactor* does principally belong to those who are at present useful, and likewise oblige Posterity.

Such a one was King *David*, who Serv'd his own Generation very Faithfully; and having finish'd his Course, delivered his *Lamp* to the succeeding Age. Of this, as many are convinced, as either read the History of his Life, or peruse his *Psalms* with Application of Mind.

And it was his care, amongst his other pious Designs, to continue the *Memory* of God's Wonderful Works from *Age* to *Age*; to the end that the Consideration of his Power and Goodness might effectually move them to obey his Laws. Of such Remembrances they stood in great need, being apt no longer to think upon the Miracles of Divine Mercy, than whilst they saw them.

Wherefore God himself prescribed this way of teaching his Statutes, and rehearsing the History of his Mighty Acts, (and especially those at *Horeb*) to *their Sons*, and their *Sons Sons*. Deut. 4. 9.

And that the *Israelites* might not err in the repetition, he caus'd those Statutes and wonders to be written down; not leaving them to the uncertainty of Oral Tradition,

which sometimes either passeth by things of moment, or delivers them down very imperfectly, and too often brings it to pass, that the Legends of one Age, become History in those that follow.

God established a Testimony in Jacob, and appointed a Law in Israel, which he commanded our Fore-fathers; that they should make them known to their Children.

That the Generations to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children.

The *Argument* of *Doing Good to Posterity*, being set forth in these words, not by any General Precept, but only by the especial Instance of propagating the Knowledge of his Law; I shall use them rather as the *Occasion*, than the *Ground* of this Proposition.

'That a Good Man, according to his Talent and 'Circumstance, does endeavour in such manner to *Do* 'good in his time, that the next Age also may proba- 'bly reap the benefit of it.

Concerning this kind of *Charity*, I purpose to consider.

1. *How fit and just a thing it is to put it in Practice.*

2. *That, notwithstanding its fitness, there is too general a disuse of it.*

3. *whence it comes to pass that there is of Common a failure in so necessary a Duty.*

4. *By what means the Exercise of it may be made more regular, and more frequent among us; that so the ages to come may have just cause to Bless Almighty God for the advantages derived to them from this Generation.*

1. Now, *First of all*, the *doing of Good to Posterity*, may appear a fit and reasonable Practice;

1. From a common Rule of Good and Evil.

2. From the Obligation which man is under, to imitate God.

3. From the Gratitude we owe to former Ages.

1. This is a Common Rule concerning *Good*, not only that it is to be done, but that we are to do what,

upon

upon the whole matter, is the *greatest good* which we are capable of doing in our Sphere and Condition. Now Good is increased as well by the *Duration* of Benefits, as by their *Magnitude* and *Number*; so that if the Good be equal in other respects, he that does the Charity that lasts *but a day*, does well; but he that does the Good that lasts *some years*, does still better. He who out of good will, gives *a cup of cold water* to a thirsty man, performs a Charitable Office; but that Person is, by much, the greater Benefactor, who opens a *Fountain* which from time to time may give refreshment to Man and Beast. Wherefore by the Reasons and Proportions of *Good*, a man is requir'd, according to his ability, to look beyond the term of his own few and uncertain days, known only to God how few they are.

He is,

2. Required to *benefit Posterity*, that he may be a Follower of God in true Religion, which is the *imitation* of Him whom we worship: And by doing Charities which may last, we are made, in some measure like to Him; for all Generations partake of the Goodness of God.

He so framed the Material World at the beginning, that by the same Order of Nature (the same for the main) it might in its several Ages conveniently subsist; and the same *Sun* that shone on *Adam*, enlightens us.

God permitted men in the *first* Age of the World, to live very many Years, that by their Experience (especially in the Course of the Stars, which required length of time for observation) the *following* Ages might receive *useful* Instruction; *useful*, not only in secular Affairs, but in Religion; the *Heavens*, the *more they understood*, *declaring the more the Glory of God*.

He ordained the *Sabbath*, the *Passover*, the *Sacrament* of the Lords Supper, not merely for the men of any *one* Age, but as *Memorials* of the *Creation*, of the *Deliverance* out of *Egypt*; of the meritorious *Passion* of our Redeemer, for many Generations.

He

He sent his Blessed Son *once* to offer a Sacrifice, whose Virtue might be communicated to all true Christians, as long as there should be a Church on Earth.

He caused Holy *Scriptures* to be written for the good of all following times; and the things which were written of old, were written for our Admonition, upon whom the *ends of the world are come*. For instance, we are commanded to *Remember the wife of Lot*, who, so many Years ago, (looking *back towards Sodom*) was turn'd into a Pillar of *Salt* and *Sulphur*, *Gen.* 19. 25. 26. *S. Luke* 17. 32. *Deut.* 29. 23. being punish'd in the same extraordinary way with those unclean Sinners who remained in it.

3. There is not a fitter expression of our *gratitude to former Ages*, than a hearty endeavour to procure advantage to those who come after us, as we have received benefit by those who went before us; borrowing Light from their Light, and living upon the Effects of their Benevolence. If nothing had been done for us, in how miserable an Estate should we have come into the World and lived in it? Much more miserably than *Adam*, who in the state of Innocence, enjoy'd the Earth, without the Curse which Disobedience brought upon it. If all Arts, and Sciences, and Buildings, and other such Helps and Conveniences of *Humane Life*, were to be invented and begun with every Age, how rude, how mean would the condition of it be? How heavily would it be pressed with the burthen of Necessity? How much more painful and laborious would this render the Pilgrimage of man, which as it is, with all its advantages, has still its sufficient share of trouble? In what darkness had we sate in reference to the means of our Redemption, if it had not pleased the God of Wisdom, through the hands of the Christians of former Centuries, to deliver down to us the Holy Bible?

It does therefore well become us to have a sense of the Favours of those who died before our times, but still

ſtill live in their benefits; and gratefully to celebrate their juſt Praiſe, and to have a perpetual inclination, when we have not further power, *to go; and to do likewiſe.*

But as *fit* and *juſt* as this *Practice* is, there ſeems to be

2. *Too general a diſuſe of it*, Some are careful even to Anxiety, but they ſhow that the ſolicitude is for their ſelves, by their backwardneſs in diſpoſing of any thing ſo much as by a WILL. Some let *Receits* and *Inventions* dye with them, by which great numbers in ſucceeding Ages might have been profited. Some are not provident for *their ſelves*, and therefore not likely to take due care for Poſterity. They will not put a *ſtone* into a decaying Building, or drop an *acorn* into the Ground for the ſake of thoſe that ſhall follow them; much leſs have they a zeal for the ſupporting of Gods Church in difficult times, or the planting of true Religion in places that want the bleſſing of it: Inſomuch that when they give up their wretched lives (as give them up they muſt, what averſion ſoever they have to it) they appear as a Place ſurrendred after a long and tedious Siege, where little remains, beſides dead Corpſes Rubbiſh, and Ruins.

And this puts me in mind of ſtill a worſer *ſort of men*, who by their *inhumanity*, make ſuch deſolations in their times, as late Poſterity can ſcarce repair. Their Talent lies not in promoting *Truth*, and *Holy Worſhip*, but in forcing Error and Idolatry; not in Building and Planting, but in plucking up and deſtroying. They are imitators of *Apollyon* the God of this World, whoſe *Delight* is Miſchief, whoſe Triumphs are Barbarities, Fire and Sword are the Inſtruments of their *Glory*: They ſpare neither the *Bodies* of the Living, nor the *Monuments* of the Dead. They lay waſt in a few hours, ſtrong and beautiful Cities, which were the fruit of the Arts and Labours of former Times. One would think they would anticipate Doomſday it ſelf, if their Force were

equal to their Pride and Malice: Though that sort of men, of all others in the World, have the least reason to hasten the Day of Judgment. When their Acts shall be rehearsed before the *Children that are yet unborn*, they will rise up with just indignation, and call their Memories accursed.

If (as we have proposed in the *third place*)

3. We inquire into the Causes of this Uncharitableness, we shall without much difficulty, find them amongst the *ill Principles* and disorderly *Lusts* and *Passions* and *Humours* of unreasonable men. As for example;

The *Atheistical*, if they follow the consequence of their Opinion, terminate their *Designs*, as they imagine they do their humane *Beings*, in this *Life*.

Those who live by *Sense*, whose Objects are *present*, have no regard for such as they shall never live to see; for such as are not capable of returning them immediate thanks, of making them Presents, of pleasing them with flatteries, of rendring them such services as are most grateful to flesh and blood.

The *slothful* will not be at the pains to build or to uphold, to manure or cultivate, to catechise a Child, or instruct a Servant, or discreetly to reprove an irregular Neighbour: They will let their *own Vineyards* be over-run, in their own times with Briars and Thorns.

The *Careless* and *Voluptuous* are contented to think (if thinking be at any time the exercise of such Affectors of of Ease) that Peace and Plenty will last for their Days; and that is all the Eternity they care for; though by such neglect, Ruin often comes down upon their Heads before the term of their Life is expired. So it commonly happens to the *Prodigal* who inspect not their Affairs, and believe their Fortune to be *sufficient for their Time*; and in that Imagination, say to their Souls, *Take your ease*; and dream on till they are surpriz'd by Poverty:

And

And, if their looſe and ſwift way of living permits them to number many Years; there remain to them the feweſt Supplies in *that Age* which has the moſt and greateſt needs, the Age of *Labour and Sorrow.*

Furthermore,

The *Ill-natur'd* hate the reſt of the World, and are not pleaſed that the ſtate of it ſhould be bettered by them. Out of the abundance of ſuch an ill Heart came that worſt of Sayings pronounced by one of the Brutal Heathens, *When I leave the World, let Earth and Fire mingle*; or, let the Frame of Nature be immediately diſſolv'd. He would have forborn thoſe wicked Words, if he had but juſt thought of that more dreadful Fire which Divine Juſtice has prepared for the Uncharitable.

Moreover, the *Proud* and the *Deſigning*, who are themſelves ignorant, will on purpoſe deny a leberal Education to thoſe Children who are under their Conduct, leſt they grow too wiſe and ſenſible for them.

From the ſame *Paſſion* it is, that Wicked Men endeavour to hinder both preſent and future Good, by depreſſing generous and worthy Perſons, giving them occaſion to complain, with that great Warrior *Beliſarius*; " It was not a *Crime* that hurt us but En-" vy.

Likewiſe, the *Covetuous* either ſtifle the *Wills* of the Charitable, or forbear to fulfill them; converting that to their own uſe, which was piouſly intended for others.

Alſo, the *Malicious* ſtudy on purpoſe to leave *That which muſt go to others*, in a ruinous Condition. It may be, without a Houſe for ſhelter, or a Tree for ſhade, or a Field worn out with perpetual bearing, or a Paper for Direction, and for the determination of Strife; much more without a Prayer for the Proſperity of thoſe who ſhall come after them.

Again, of ſome Men of revengeful Diſpoſitions, it has

has been said, That on their very *Death-Beds*, [a solemn Time in which nothing should supplant the Love of God and Man; when their abundant Charity should, through Christ, prepare their way to the *Mercy* of God before whom they are suddenly to appear] that, being engaged in vexatious Suits and Quarrels with others, they have given it in charge to the Heirs of their Families, to keep up the Grudg, and to continue the Controversy from Generation to Generation.

Finally, Where this Evil Tempter abounds, it entails Trouble and Confusion: For it requires little skill to unfix and embroil, but a great deal to establish. May That (as we hope, and as we pray) be, for the future, the *Wisdom* of this Age, to the end that it may flourish in True Religion, in Unity, in Plenty, Peace and Health, and by that means become a Blessing to these Lands for ever.

These Evil *Principles*, *Lusts*, *Passions*, and *Humours* which I have mentioned, are the *Causes of the Decay* of that generous Charity so beneficial to the Ages to come.

But, *Fourthly*,

Let us not follow the inordinate Affections and unreasonable Customs of the Men of this World, but be prevailed with to imitate *David*? or rather, the God of *David*, who hath a Blessing for every Age; and who, when he rested from the *Work of Creation*, did not forbear the Works of *Providence*.

To this purpose,

First, That we may be capable of practising this sort of Charity, the forementioned *Passions* are to be subdued by pious Consideration, by Prayer for the especial Grace of God, by firm and steadfast Resolution, by Conversation with Christians whose Hearts are enlarged, by reading the holy Scriptures, and in them, the History of God's Power and Goodness.

Secondly, being thus made capable of doing present and future Good; that we may do it as we ought, the

the *Good-will*, the right *Scope*, the *Decency*, the *Juſtice* of It, are well to be weighed.

And, *Firſt*, *Good-will* ought to be the Spring which moves Men that benefit thoſe who ſucceed them; for it is no Virtue to *leave that behind us*, which Death will not permit us to *carry away*. *Dives laid up Goods for many years*, and he left them to Others, without being to them a Benefactor; for, *he laid them up for himſelf*, upon a vain and preſumptuous ſuppoſition of long Life; in which he was miſerably diſappointed, by the ſurprizing Juſtice of that Righteous God, who ſaid to Him, *Thou Fool! this Night thy Soul ſhall be taken from thee.*

Again, This *Good-will* is to be directed to a right and profitable *Scope*; that Charity may not be blinded by *Superſtition*, which hath founded many *Societies*, and left great Revenues, and enriched many *Shrines*, to the *hurt of Poſterity*, by promoting the Honour of falſe Deities and Saints; and by encouraging a Worſhip from Age to Age, in which the True God can take no pleaſure.

There is alſo to be obſerved, in this Practice, a *Decency*, which forbids a Man to be ſeverely *Penurious* all his days, for *the doing a greater Good at the laſt*. It is true, He is not to be condemned for cutting off unneceſſary Pomps and Expences in order to ſo good an End: And he may be bold with himſelf. But, though there may be *a laudable Frugality*, there muſt not be a *ſordidneſs* in his Selfdenial.

Add to this, That *Juſtice*, as well as *Decency* becomes all Men who piouſly deſign to be Benefactors to Poſterity. They are not to do Evil that Good may come of it; or, to be unjuſt, Oppreſſors, Extortioners in one Age, that they may be bountiful to another. Yet, ſuch is the manner of the Covetuous, who love not Mankind, nor their very Off-ſpring as Men, but in the Quality of their ſecond-ſelves: They run the hazard even of Damnation, for the greatning of thoſe, who generally

rally ſpend with vicious profuſeneſs all that Wealth which, with ſuch guilt of Conſcience they had gathered together.

Thirdly, Having found out ſuch *Rules* as theſe for the governing of our Practice, we may render our ſelves more fit for the diſcharge of ſo Excellent a Duty.

Firſt, By removing certain Diſcouragements.

Secondly, By attending to ſome further Motives.

The *Diſcouragements* are of *Two* Kinds.

1. *Suſpicions* of *Ability* to do ſuch good.

2. *Hindrances* of *Willingneſs* in Thoſe who are able to do it; and in ſome of them who are not ill inclined.

1. Men of *inferiour Condition* ſuſpect their *Ability*; imagining, that he who would become a Benefactor, muſt be arm'd with great Power and Authority' indued with high degrees of Wiſdom, and furniſhed with ſuch heaps of growing Wealth, as may ſupply Charity, without ſenſible Diminution.

Whereas there are divers waies by which Perſons, in meaner Circumſtances, may, in *their Age*, be uſeful both to *that* and the *next*. A poor Man, as we read in *Eccleſiaſtes*, did by his prudent Counſel deliver a City. And that Place had, probably, the Benefit of his good Advice a long time after; tho' whilſt his wiſdom made him conſiderable, his Poverty expoſed him to the Scorn and Neglect of the Proud and ungrateful. There are true Benefactors in the World beſides ſuch who have Ability to make *Publick Waies*, to repair *Breaches* of the Sea, to calm that which is tumultuous, the Rage of the People; to build Houſes for God's Worſhip, to found Colledges and Hoſpitals, to ſubdue public Enemies, and to enact wholſom Laws, which are the Nerves of Society, and by the ſtrength of which we a while (by God's Bleſſing) ſubſiſted, though Popiſh Superſtition did ſo furiouſly aſſault us. Many may communicate

to

to their Neighbours a wholſom *Medicine*, though they cannot erect a Houſe for the Sick, and Wounded, and Impotent. Every Maſter of a Family in *Iſrael.* was obliged to ſhew his Children the Reaſon of the *Paſchal Feaſt*, and to teach them the Law of God. Thoſe, therefore, were not Performances out of their Power, for then they could not have been their Duty. And to Chriſtians their great Maſter ſaith, What excellent things do ye? What do *ye more than others*? Much Good they may do by rehearſing the Holy Hiſtory of God's Law and his wonderful Works before others, that they may learn it, and tranſmit it to the next Generation. Much Good they may do by teaching of neceſſary Doctrines to Youth, and by forming the manners of thoſe who are likely to outlive them. They may inſtil into them betimes ſuch Chriſtian Principles as may grow up with them, and *bring forth Fruit in their Age.* He who hath a ſmall proportion of Silver or Gold, may yet be ſometimes capable of leaving behind him a more valuable Legacy: By giving the World a *Book of Piety*, ſuch as that of the *Whole Duty of Man*, by which the judicious and modeſt Author hath done a greater Good to thoſe who lived in and after his Time, than if he had poured forth other Riches upon them in overflowing meaſure.

Moſt are capable of doing a durable Charity by good *Example*, which may operate when they are dead and gone. To how many Generations has the Inſtance of afflicted *Job* adminiſtred Courage and Support, whilſt they have called it to Remembrance in the Time of their Trouble? And there is great need of *virtuous Example* for the ballancing of that which is *Bad*; the Contagion of which ſticks like Leproſie in Families, Churches and Kingdoms. *Jeroboam* the Son of *Nebat* made *Iſrael* to ſin 1. King. 14. 16. [to commit that great Sin of Idolatry, by worſhipping the true God by an Image] both in *his Time*, and after he was gone to anſwer both for his own and for other Men's Sins. But what An-

ſwer

swer could he make for either? Either was a Burthen too heavy for him to bear.

Then, *for the Charity of Prayer*, who is there that cannot call on God for a Bleſſing on Perſons and Families, on Churches and States, after they ſhall have left this unquiet Stage, and that *Scheme of the World which paſſeth away*. Exod. 20. 5, 6. C. 34. 7. Deut. 7. 9.

In ſum, all *Wicked Men*, as wicked, are hurtful, and all *Good Men*, as good, are beneficial both at preſent and for the future. Bleſſing and Curſing perſue Families very often, according to the Righteouſneſs or Impiety of the firſt Heads of them.

Secondly, There are *Diſcouragements* which hinder Men, who are able to do Good to other Generations, from being *Willing*. That is to ſay, The Inſtance of *Backwardneſs* in Public Mannagers to *reward* thoſe who have undone themſelves by ſome *uſeful Invention*, which generally ruines the firſt *Profeſſors*, whilſt Poſterity reaps the fruit of their Wit, Labour, and Expence. Alſo the Inſtances of *Failures* and *Frauds* of ſmothered or abuſed Legacies, in *Truſt*, of the converting of that to the uſe of the Rich, which is bequeathed to the Poor; together with the Conſideration of the *uncertainty of Times*, in which, by Wars and tumultuous Violences, the Effects of publick Charity do often periſh.

There is much Truth in this *Objection*, but yet not ſo much as makes it *unanſwerable*. *Uſeful Inventions* are often greater Charities than could have been done by the Pains and Wealth which they coſt. *Frauds* and *Abuſes* do not alwaies happen: They do not alwaies come; and *wo to them*, not who are injur'd by them, but by *whom they come*. And the Obſervation of ſuch accidental Miſcarriages ſhould, indeed, *increaſe the Caution*, but not prevent the Charity of wealthy Men. It is, alſo, profitable for us to remember, That whatſoever Hazards *Good Works run*, the Soul that has done them in Chriſtian Manner, ſhall be ſafe in the Hands of their Mediator. Chriſtians know in whom they have believed,

ed, and how able he is to keep that which is committed to *his Truſt* to *that Day*.

For the *uncertainty* of *Times* and *Seaſons*, that's an Objection againſt doing Good in all Ages; for Heaven only is *a Kingdom which cannot be ſhaken*.

Wherefore, laying aſide theſe Impediments, caſt in our Way by too great a Degree of Jealouſie, let us,

Secondly, Provoke our ſelves to Piety and to Good Works, by laying before our Thoughts ſuch further *Motives* as theſe.

The *Firſt* may be taken from the *true pleaſure* which is found in all *good Acts*, and particularly of thoſe of that kind of which we have been ſpeaking. *Pleaſure* naturally ſprings up in the Mind, when we think of any thing we much value, as *continuing* and *proſpering*. A great degree of happineſs conſiſts in *hope*, and in hope cheriſhed by *proceeding*. The Mind is *damp'd* when it is *ſtinted*, and when it ſees an end of any thing in which it took content. And if pleaſure is derived to us from the growth and progreſs even of our humbleſt *Plants*, much more ſhall we be pleaſed by the extent of our goodneſs to Chriſtian Men, and in the duration of it. It is a bleſſed and comfortable Thought, that God will vouchſafe to uſe ſuch frail earthen Veſſels, as Inſtruments of *good*; by Inſtruction, by Example, by Prayers, by Alms, not only for the Span of our Life, but *for many years to come*. It was a ſtrong Conſolation to *Abraham*, that in his Off-ſpring all the *Nations of the Earth ſhould be bleſſed*.

The *Second Motive* may be taken from *Honour*, which is *Fame* acquired by doing of *worthy things*. After this Men ſo naturally thirſt, that ſome have affected the Name of *Benefactors*, Luke 22. 25. who have turn'd their Power into Oppreſſion; for of that number (as *Philo* ſhews us) was *Caius Caligula*. They underſtood what was venerable, but they did not purſue it.

Even

Even the *Charity* which is *tranſient*, is honourable; and the Woman who with her Spikenard *anointed our Saviour to his burial*, is to this day honourably remembred whereſoever the Hiſtory of the Goſpel is read. And if to *tranſient good* our Praiſe is due, certainly to that which is *laſting* it ought not to be denied. Wherefore the *Holy Virgin*, conſidering the Salvation of the World by Chriſt, whoſe Mother ſhe was become through God's ſpecial favour, believed not her *Magnificat* to be a vainglorious *Hymn*, but ſaid with humble Joy, *God hath bregarded the lowlineſs of his Hand-maiden; for behold from henceforth all Generations ſhall call me bleſſed.*

But the *greateſt Motives* of all are, *Conſcience*, which requireth us to do *good*, as our Chriſtian Duty.

Religious Fear, which ſets before the *Unprofitable* (the unprofitable to Men, for God we cannot profit) the *Terrors* of the *great Day*. And, laſt of all,

Religious Hope, which moves us to be uſeful, in all our Capacities, whilſt time laſts, upon the moſt comfortable proſpect of an Eternal Recompence.

O the bleſſed Day, when thoſe *who abound in the work of the Lord Jeſus*, ſhall find *their labour not to be in vain in the* ſame Lord. When the penitent, pious, and righteous, ſhall behold the general Aſſembly of thoſe *great Souls* who neither *liv'd nor dy'd to themſelves*. May God prepare us for this Felicity, by Faith, and Repentance, and Good Works, through him who was both the *deſire* and the *bleſſing of all Nations, Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous*, to whom with the *Father* and the *Holy Ghoſt* be all Honour and Glory, World without end, *Amen*.

FINIS.